



Town of Shrewsbury
Home Heating Resource Booklet
Helping Shrewsbury Residents
Stretch Their Dollars This Winter Season!

Home
Heating
Safety



Home
Heating
Energy
Saving
Tips

Various Assistance Programs
Other Dollar Saving Resources

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Dear Shrewsbury Resident:

The fourth edition of this booklet has been updated in the hope of educating the community on the wide variety of resources that are available to assist residents with their winter heating costs.

Although many of the services listed in this booklet have been around for years, getting information on them has sometimes proven to be difficult for the average person wanting to know what help is available.

The Home Heating Group was formed in 2008 and it was agreed that it would be beneficial for the town to have a concise summary of the existing programs available to residents.

On behalf of the Home Heating Group and the Board of Selectmen, we hope you find this information helpful and welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,

John Lebeaux

John Lebeaux

Maurice DePalo

Maurice DePalo

Fuel Assistance

Most people have heard of Fuel Assistance, but don't know much about it. It is **not** just for oil, and can be used for gas, propane and electric heating bills as well.

What is fuel assistance?

Fuel assistance, also known as Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a federally funded program which helps low-income families and individuals pay their heating bills during the winter months. Shrewsbury is served through the Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC).

Who qualifies?

Eligibility is based on gross annual household income, regardless of whether you own or rent. If you rent, you may receive fuel assistance even if your heat is included in the rent.

What benefits will I get?

The amount will depend on your income, the number of people in your household, the type of fuel you use, your heating costs and how much federal funding is available for applicants. The amount is intended to offset heating expenses, not cover them in full. You may also be eligible for additional help, such as weatherization services and heating system repairs.

What are the program's income limits?

Eligibility and level of benefits depend on the percentage of the household's income in relation to the federal poverty guidelines. This can be a complicated formula and sometimes the amounts are changed during the program year. Even if someone proves to be over income, one might still qualify or be eligible for other programs.

How do I apply?

If you are 59 years of age or younger, contact **Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services (SYFS)** at 508-845-6932.

If you are 60 or older, contact the **Shrewsbury Council on Aging, (COA)** located at the Shrewsbury Senior Center at 508-841-8640.

Full contact information on both agencies are on page 18.

If you have a household with mixed ages, you may contact either site, the staff members work closely together and will assist you.





Salvation Army's

Good Neighbor Energy Fund

What is this fund?

The Good Neighbor Energy Fund helps Massachusetts residents pay for winter heating fuel and other energy bills. The Fund is for people facing financial difficulty and **do not** qualify for other fuel assistance programs. It is a joint effort between the gas and electric companies and The Salvation Army.

Who qualifies?

You may be eligible if you are in financial need and **do not** qualify for government energy assistance programs. The following requirements must be met to be eligible in addition to being a Massachusetts resident:

- You are facing a financial crisis that makes you unable to pay your energy bills, such as job loss or an illness.
- You are **not** eligible for government energy assistance programs.
- Your household's gross income must be between 60% and 80% of the State Median Income Level for the prior 12 months prior of the application.

What benefits will I get?

A one-time amount is given to offset heating costs. Emergency heating assistance begins after December 1st, and non-emergency heating assistance begins after January 1st. Benefits are modest and vary depending on the donations that have been collected. All funds are given directly to the vendor, not the applicant.

How do I apply?

To apply, call the Salvation Army's Worcester Office at **508-756-7191** for more information or visit the website at:
<http://www.magoodneighbor.org/assistance.html>



As part of a community risk reduction and public education initiative, the Shrewsbury Fire Department (SFD) is launching a pilot program that will provide smoke detector installations and home-safety assessments to Shrewsbury residents at **NO COST!**

**Are you a candidate for
a FREE program
providing smoke
detector installation
and home safety
assessments?**

Funding supported by the Town of Shrewsbury and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant: Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program.

For more information, contact SFD at (508) 841-8522.



Share The Warmth

What is this program?

Every year, the Shrewsbury Electric & Cable Operations (SELCO) asks the community for monetary donations to help residents in need maintain electric service during the winter months.

Who qualifies for help?

Currently, SELCO does **not** take inquiries nor accept applications directly from individuals. A resident **must** be referred by one of the town's churches or human service agencies. SELCO relies on the referring agency's screening methods to determine whether the applicant is eligible. Participating agencies include:

- First Congregational Church
- Shrewsbury Council on Aging (Senior Center)
- Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services
- St. Anne's Human Services
- St. Mary's Parish

Other agencies or individuals, such as physicians or therapists, can also make a referral on behalf of the resident and can contact one of the agencies mentioned on their client's behalf.

What benefits will I get?

Each year, SELCO's available funds vary. The amount each household receives depends on how many people are in need, how much is needed and how much funding is available. SELCO works closely with the referring agencies to try to keep the program as fair as possible. At the end of the heating season, somewhere between March 1st and April 30th, credits will be applied to the applicant's electric bill.

How do I apply?

If you are already a client of one of the agencies mentioned above, simply mention the Share the Warmth application to a staff or volunteer at the agency. If you are currently not a client, but need assistance, go to one of the agencies to get an application. A short, one page form is all that is required. Please do **not** contact or go to SELCO directly for an application. You **must** work with a referring agency.



EVERSOURCE Financial Assistance Programs

What programs are offered?

Eversource offers several different programs that work with state and federal agencies to help those customers who need assistance.

Discount Rate

If you currently receive certain government means-tested benefits or qualify for fuel assistance, you might be eligible for a Discount Rate. For more information or to enroll in a payment plan, visit <https://www.eversource.com/Content/ema-g/residential/programs-services/financial-assistance>.

Please be aware that since December 2004, Eversource is required to make customer information available to the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance to help determine and enroll the Discount Rate customers. Customers have the option to exclude their information from this list. More instructions are on the website.

Arrears Forgiveness Program, Now Called “Nu-Start”

If you receive certain government means-tested benefits, or qualify for Fuel Assistance, and meet some other criteria, you may be eligible to have portions of your bill’s overdue balance forgiven. To begin your new start, call 1-866-315-2496.

65 Plus and Double Notice Protection

This service keeps those households with all members 65 years of age or older from receiving a final notice on their electric bill, with an option to allow Eversource to notify a relative or friend about overdue bills.

Payment Plans

Eversource works with its customers to help spread out the costs of high usage months over the course of the year when needed. A link on the website can help you with this arrangement.

If you do not have access to a computer, contact the Shrewsbury agencies listed on page 18 to help you. For further information on these programs contact Eversource at **1-800-592-2000**

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

What is Carbon Monoxide? Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. It is often called "the invisible killer". It is created when fossil fuels, such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane, or wood do not burn completely. Exposure to carbon monoxide can be fatal, for people and for pets. Headache, nausea, and drowsiness are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

How can I avoid Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning? First, install and maintain Carbon Monoxide alarms (CO) outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, and in other locations as required by laws, codes, or standards. For the best protection, have CO alarms that are interconnected throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound. Test carbon monoxide (CO) alarms at least once a month and replace them if they fail to respond when tested.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning can result from malfunctioning or improperly vented furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in garages. Open the damper for proper ventilation before using a fireplace, and vent the exhaust from fuel-burning equipment to the outside. Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow and other debris, as well as the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle.

Never use an oven or stovetop to heat your home, and never use a barbecue grill inside the home, or the garage (even if the doors are open!) Use portable generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas away from the home. If you are using a portable generator, make sure you have battery-operated carbon monoxide (CO) alarms or plug-in CO alarms with a battery backup.

What do I do if my CO alarm sounds? Immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors. Make sure everyone is accounted for. Call 9-1-1 or the fire department from the fresh air location. Remain there until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

Call the **Shrewsbury Fire Department at 508-841-8522** to learn more, or visit their webpage (<http://www.shrewsburyma.gov>. Click on 'Government', 'Town Departments', 'and Fire Department'

You can also learn more about CO by visiting the following websites:

<http://www.carbonmonoxidekills.com>

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html>

Home Heating and Fire Safety

The **Shrewsbury Fire Department** wants you to be warm and **SAFE** during the cold season! Here are some guidelines to help!

General Heating

- All heaters need space. Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from heating equipment, and maintain a 3-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys and vents by having them cleaned and inspected EVERY YEAR by a qualified professional.
- Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Carbon monoxide is created when fuels burn incompletely. Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause illness and even death. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice and other debris around the outlet to the outside.
- Do not use space heaters to dry blankets or clothing. Air dry them or use a clothes dryer.
- Use only newspaper and kindling wood or fire starters to start a fire. Never use flammable liquids, such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline, to start a fire. They produce invisible vapors that can easily catch fire.

Portable Electric Space Heaters

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Purchase and use only portable space heaters that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory, and only those that have an automatic shut-off-if they tip over, they shut off.
- Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip, and do not plug anything else into the same circuit as the one you are using for your space heater. Doing so could result in overheating.

Fuel-Burning Space Heaters

- Always use the proper fuel, and the proper grade of fuel, as specified by the manufacturer.
- When refueling, allow the appliance to cool first, then refuel outside.
- When using the space heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the building immediately and call 9-1-1, the fire department, or the gas company.

Home Heating and Fire Safety, Continued

- **Unvented liquid fire space heaters are now prohibited under state law.** M.G.L. Chapter 148, Section 5A, states that “No person shall use, allow to be used, sell or offer for sale any unvented liquid fired space heater.”
- If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying to relight the pilot. Follow manufacturer's instructions when relighting the pilot. Do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback.

Wood-Burning and Pellet Stoves

- In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. Not only is it cleaner for the environment, it also creates less buildup in the chimney.
- In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
- Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing of them. Place ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet (3 meters) away from the home and any other buildings. Never empty the ash directly into a trash can. Douse and saturate the ashes with water.

Fireplaces

- Always use a metal or heat-tempered glass screen on a fireplace and keep it in place.
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood. Never burn trash or cardboard in the fireplace, as they can burn unevenly, may contain toxins, and increase the risk of uncontrolled fires.
- Use artificial fire logs according to manufacturer's recommendations. Never burn more than one log at a time.
- Keep children and pets away from the outside vents. Have a "kid-free zone" of at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from the fireplace. Glass doors and screens can remain dangerously hot for several hours after the fire goes out.

This information was taken from materials from the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, contact the **Shrewsbury Fire Department**.

Call them at **508-841-8522**, or visit the website:

<http://www.shrewsburyma.gov>.

Click on ‘Government’, ‘Town Departments’,
‘Fire Department’ and ‘Public Safety’ to view the list of resources.

Emergency Preparedness Kits:

The most important thing to do to prepare for any emergency, whether it be a hurricane, flash flood or winter storm, is to have a **Family Disaster Supply Kit** ready. Although disasters happen all year long, when a winter storm hits, the cold weather will add to the urgency. Regardless of what is going on outside, there is always the possibility that your own heating system may fail due to a mechanical or other problem, causing a Home Heating Emergency for you. You should have a kit ready YEAR ROUND, although the winter months are especially important.

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Prescription medications, glasses, infant formula and diapers, pet food, matches, sleeping bags, mess kits, clothing, and cash are a few more important items. Check the site: **www.ready.gov** for additional tips and suggestions for kit preparation, including family pets, and good activities to keep kids busy during an emergency.

Town-Wide or Large Scale Emergencies

If you are a senior or have someone in your home with special needs, please make the police, fire, COA, SYFS aware of your issues so that your family can be prioritized properly in the event of an large scale emergency.

The 2008 Ice Storm and October 2011 blizzard brought acute emergency awareness to most town residents who were without power, some of them for days. However, people quickly forget what to do and can be lax on preparedness. Here are some good resources.

Shrewsbury Emergency Management, (SEMA)

Director: Seth Colby

Phone: 508-841-8396,

E-mail: scolby@shrewsburyma.gov

Website: www.shrewsburyma.gov

(Click Government, Town Departments, then Emergency Management)
Learn about the local team who will be in charge in the event of an emergency. Watch a slide show and follow step by step to make your kit, which is explained more on the previous page. There is also information on how you will be notified if you need to evacuate. Various emergencies are covered...from all types of weather to man-made disasters, such as an oil or chemical spill.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

www.fema.gov: Learn more about the Federal level of Emergency Management. Preparedness, nationwide emergency updates and more.

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

www.mass.gov: see the alphabetical list of state agencies.

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

The Red Cross has a wealth of information available on their site, go to the first tab for Preparedness. You can also call the local Worcester chapter at 508-595-3700. (This division is separate from the Red Cross Blood Bank).

For Seniors: The Red Cross also has a special booklet “Disaster Preparedness For Seniors, By Seniors” available at the Senior Center. The 29 page color booklet is in large print and include easy-to-follow checklists that are ready to use.

Other Agency Resources:

Besides the programs mentioned, there are other agencies out there for people to consider if they need services.

⇒**Catholic Charities:** A utility fund helps low to middle income families who are not eligible for other government programs. Benefits given vary depending on the donations Catholic Charities receives, and you may use the funds even if you are already receiving fuel assistance. Call 508-798-0191 for more information.

⇒**Mass Energy Consumer Alliance:** A non-profit organization with 14,000 members (membership fee applies) who work with local, full service dealers to negotiate wholesale prices on oil. An “Oil Bank” is also available to members, as well as programs on advocacy, green electricity, Bio Heating oil and more. (Since 1982) Call 1-800-287-3950 or visit www.massenergy.org

⇒**Resources for Communities and People (RCAP):** Wealth of client resources and housing programs: housing and foreclosure assistance, aid for families in transition, loans for accessibility modifications and more. 508-792-5230, website: <http://rcapsolutions.org/>.

⇒**211:** This new national service run by the United Way works like “411”, and acts as a clearing house for a variety of Human Service Organizations. Simply dial “211” on your phone, or visit the website at www.211.org.



Simple Energy Tips for Winter

1. Fleece sweatshirt or knit sweater? Many synthetics, like fleece are much warmer than other fabrics, especially in socks and sleepwear.
2. Try to cut down on the use of kitchen and bathroom fans in winter. These fans cool the air and waste household heat.
3. Get some “door sweeps” for the base of exterior doors. These are usually less than \$10 at craft fairs and can also serve as cute decorations.

These tips and more can be found from:

50 Ways To Cut Home Heating Bills: www.chiff.com/a/cut-heat-bills.htm
Do a search on “How to Cut Heating Bills” and find many informative sites! If you don’t have a computer, the agencies listed on page 18 can get printed material for you.

Winter Heating Help Web Site

The **United States Department on Energy** has helpful information at **www.energysavers.gov**
You'll find:

Consumer Information:

- Exhaustive list of Energy Saving Tips, including a list from the US Department of Energy on saving money both at home and on the road
- Replacing an appliance? Educate yourself on the Energy Star Programs and how they help
- How to make your home more energy-efficient, including information about available energy efficiency programs, in-home services, incentives, quality installations and inspections
- The Power Saving Hours Campaign: Did you know the peak hours of energy consumption are between 4-8pm?
- Link to www.energysavers.gov, join their Facebook page, read and contribute to their Blog, review numerous tips and guides
- Oil Delivery Tips
- How to be a smart oil heating customer
- What you should know on Heating Oil, Propane, Natural Gas and Electricity Prices

Energy Audits:

- How to conduct an audit yourself: checking for air leaks, insulation, heating and cooling equipment and lighting. A breakdown is listed for each category in an easy-to-follow format for your own audit.
- What to expect from a professional audit: tips on selecting an energy auditor, how infrared cameras are used to see heat that is being lost, what to do with the information you will receive from your audit.

Downloadable "Energy Savers Guide" The comprehensive guide is available on-line in a PDF format that is easy to use. If you do not have a computer, one of the agencies listed on page 18 can help you or you can view the PDF at the Shrewsbury Library or Senior Center on one of the public computers.

Money Saving Services:

There are many programs and services available to help you stretch your dollars this heating season. Call SYFS or the COA to learn more, the agencies are listed on page 18.

Food:



SNAP (formerly Food Stamps): Income based program open to people of all ages. Monthly credit is given toward food in a convenient, discrete card like a debit card. Very easy application. www.mass.gov/snap

Medicine:

SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders): Free counseling assists people 60 and older with determining the best health plan that is best for them. Helps with billing issues and many other health benefit issues. Available through the COA at Senior Center.

Senior Center: Free wellness screenings for hearing, spinal, blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose are offered. Call the COA to learn more.

MCPHS University Pharmacy Outreach Program: Get free advice on how to maximize the effectiveness of your prescriptions, eliminate any duplication and learn how to use your medicines safely, as well as assistance with your Medicare Drug benefit, or assistance with options for uninsured/underinsured MA residents. Call: 1-866-633-1617 or Walk-in at 25 Foster St, Worcester, MA (Mon - Fri, 8:30am - 5pm)

St. Anne's Free Medical Clinic: Located at 130 Boston Turnpike, the FREE Medical Clinic open to all (first come, first served) on Tuesdays 6:00PM to 8:00PM. Range of services include Screenings (including Dermatology on the 1st Tues of the month), consultations, pharmacy services, urgent medical care, and school physicals. To learn more, contact the African Ministry at 508-929-4329.

Learn the ABCs of Fire Safety
(available in seven languages!) at:
www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe



Money Saving Services, continued:

St. Anne's Thrift Shop and Food Pantry: A great win-win solution! Find great bargains while your dollars go directly to help others through St. Anne's Human Services. Hours are: Wed. 8am-4pm, Thurs. 9am-8pm, Fri 9am-1pm, and Sat 9am-1pm. Call 508-799-4169 for more information or visit their website at <http://stannesparish.org/humanServ.html>.

Circuit Breaker Tax Credit: Despite the confusing name, this tax credit exists for people who spend a certain amount of their income on utilities. Although you don't need to file actual taxes to get the credit, you must file a form (Schedule CB) to get the credit. The credit can also be retroactive for several years. AARP Tax Assistance in filing, and booklets on the program are available at the Senior Center.

Transportation:

Save money on fuel by riding the commuter rail, the RTA or using the COA. The van is available to those 60 and older and residents who have a disability. Call the COA for more information or the RTA: 508-791-WRTA (9782), website:



www.therta.com. To access the larger transportation system, contact the MBTA as your economical resource for traveling to Boston and the surrounding areas. Call: 1-800-392-6100 or visit the website: www.mbta.com.

Small Home Repair Program: For elders who can not arrange for simple home repairs and maintenance, the Council on Aging Outreach program works with the Ecumenical Churches to provide free labor while the senior pays for the materials. Referrals available for large jobs or cosmetic issues. See page 18 for the COA's contact information.

Contact Agencies:

For Shrewsbury residents and their families

Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services :

222 Maple Avenue, Phone: 508-845-6932

Email: info@syfs-ma.org

Website: <http://www.syfs-ma.org/>

Services to residents include: Fuel Assistance; Individual & Family Counseling; Case Management; Holiday Support; Youth Development including Afterschool and Summer Programs; Prevention, Treatment & Support Groups; and Training for Youth Mental Health First Aid.

For residents who are 60 and older

Shrewsbury Council on Aging (COA) at the Senior Center:

98 Maple Avenue, Phone: 508-841-8640

Website: www.shrewsburyma.gov/555/council-on-aging

Services to residents include Nutrition Program: Meals on Wheels and Village Café on site, Paratransit Transportation volunteer opportunities, monthly Newsletter and more.

Other Town Departments:

⇒ **Shrewsbury Building Inspector:** Most people don't realize the importance of the Building Inspector's office as a resource for heating alternatives. If you are contemplating putting in a wood stove, pellet stove or fireplace, important codes should be followed for safety and compliance. Call 508-841-8512.

⇒ **Shrewsbury Assessor's Office:** Special tax abatements and programs are available for certain individuals based on age, disability, military status and more. Call 508-841-8501.

⇒ **Veterans' Services:** Many services are available to veterans and their families. Shrewsbury is part of the Central Massachusetts Veterans' Services District, which can be reached at 774-551-5782. For more information, visit www.centralmassvets.org

The Printing of this Resource Booklet is made possible by

Senior SAFE



Senior SAFE is a grant program to local fire departments to support fire and safety education for older adults, those most at risk of dying in fires in our state. Senior SAFE builds on the successful 19 years of the school-based Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) Program that has reduced the average annual child fire deaths by 72%. The fire service expects to have a similar impact for older adults.

Some of the fire and burn risks for older adults include cooking, smoking, home oxygen use, electrical and heating dangers. In addition, Senior SAFE aims to improve the safety of older adult homes. Programs may include the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, testing and replacing batteries in these devices, the installation and checking of house numbers, high end heat limiting devices on stoves, in-hood stove fire extinguishers, nightlights, and other fall prevention interventions where needed to provide the at-risk older adult population in the community. In addition to installing any of these important safety devices, education specific to their circumstances is a crucial component of improving the safety of older adults at home.

The Senior SAFE Program is designed to create a partnership between the older adults and fire departments through established providers of senior support services such as the Council on Aging, Senior Center, Visiting Nurse Association, or other similar agencies.

Shrewsbury Home Heating Group
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, MA 01545